

IMPACT

A report on the impact of the
2018-2019 biennial budget
on Wisconsin students
with disabilities



 **Survival
Coalition**
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**I am concerned for my
child's future due to flat
funding for a decade.**

57% of Wisconsin Families Surveyed



Survey Summary

The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations inquired about the educational impact of nearly a decade of flat state special education categorical aid funding on students with disabilities and their families. The Coalition distributed a survey to parents over a three month period, asking about the impact, if any, their children were experiencing as a result of funding changes. The survey generated 574 responses from families statewide. Survival Coalition analyzed the survey and presents the following results.

Key Findings- 574 Responses

58% of respondents indicated they were concerned for their child's future due to lack of funding.

The top areas of concern:

- a reduction in supports and resources (**38% of respondents**)
- loss of special education aides (**31% of respondents**)
- lack of child's progress (**35% of respondents**)
- child more socially isolated (**47% of respondents**)
- experiencing more bullying (**25% of respondents**)

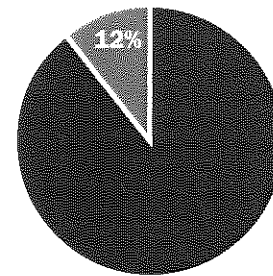
13% of respondents indicated they were seeing more clustering of students with disabilities in certain classrooms and **15% of respondents** said their child was being placed in a more restrictive setting.

443 families responded about their experience in the last two years. Families identified some positive aspects of their child's programming in the following areas:

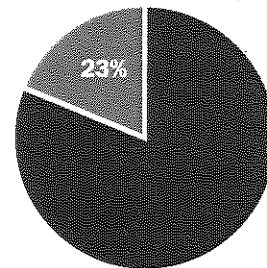
- **51%** report their child's IEP is being implemented to allow their child to make meaningful progress
- **53%** report their child spends meaningful time with peers who don't have disabilities and are making social progress.

WISCONSIN SPECIAL ED FUNDING

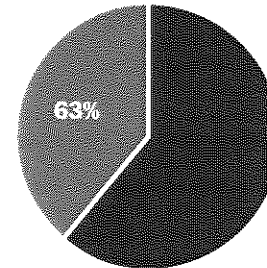
Federal special education aids
12% - 201,949,500



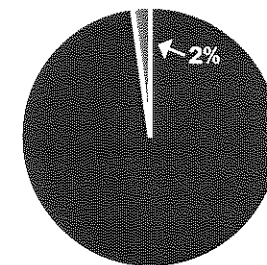
State Special education aids
23% - 359,354,000



Local school district funding
63% - 1,030,065,400



Other funding
2% - 38,812, 600



2015-2016 Total Special education
costs - 1,630,181,500

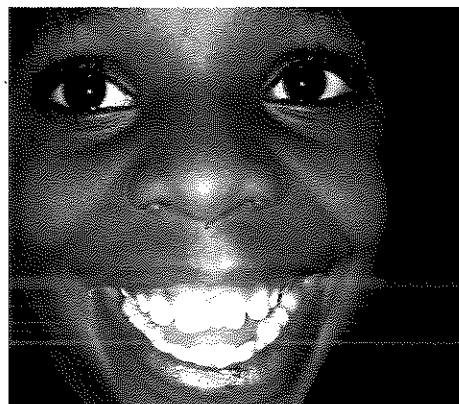
My school district has made cuts to the special education program constantly throughout the years. The keep saying everything is great and fine. The math and reading scores are the lowest ever and the readiness for college is 0%. It is so emotional. I want my child to have what every other child has and this is NOT happening. I am worried to death for his future.

Story from a Wisconsin Parent

Search For Other Options

258 Wisconsin families reported enough concerns about the quality of their child's special education services that they have considered other options

- **100 families** considered open enrollment
- **94 families** considered home schooling
- **52 families** considered private school
- **30 families** considered the special needs scholarship program
- **133 families** feel like they have no options



Stories from Wisconsin Families:

Both of my kids are in an out of district placement due to school not being able to handle them.

Selling home. Closing business. Moving to a different community/new school district.

Now that the student is being home-schooled, he has made significant gains both academically and socially

Discipline

189 families reported that their child with a disability has experienced an increase in discipline. **60 families** were called to pick up their children from school without a proper suspension.

Stories from Wisconsin families who report increases in discipline also report other types of discipline that affected their child:

My child was threatened to be arrested.

Not allowed to eat lunch with other kids for an entire school year due to late assignments.

The decrease in available staff has created an environment that is rampant with discipline issues. Students at large are demonstrating bullying behaviors with staff not having time to be proactive to create a positive learning environment.



Improvements

Families shared successes of their children, schools and staff that support them.

We have been very happy with the education and behavioral support. They have been open to suggestions and offer advice.

We moved and at the new school there are more people to work with him and help direct him the in the right direction.

We love the "super senior" option of the Independence for Learning program.

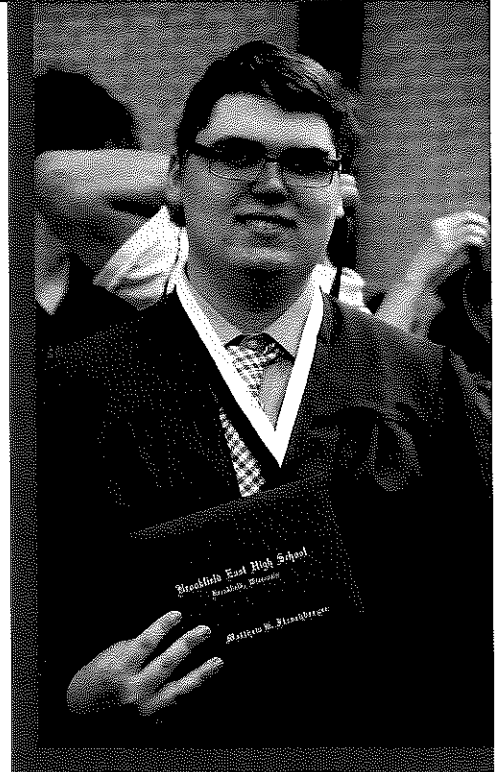
We have an amazing teacher and PT and OT.

We absolutely LOVE our support staff and primary teacher. His needs are always being taken into account. We are very blessed to be where we are.

Our teacher is very educated and truly goes beyond to ensure student success.

We cant say enough good things about her support staff and her school.

My daughter had made tremendous programs over the past two years and I am very pleased with the support she gets at school.



Conclusion

The majority of the **574 families** who responded to the survey expressed concerns related to the quality of their child's special education. **192 families** provided their personal stories to describe the most significant impacts on their child during the school year, how they felt about that and how it has affected their family. The Survival Coalition concludes that public school funding for special education is not adequate to address the social emotional well-being, functional progress, and academic progress for students with disabilities across Wisconsin. The Survival Coalition offers the following recommendations to policymakers:

- 1 Increase state special education categorical aid funding to keep pace with local costs. Fund to at least 50% of costs up from 26%, addressing a decade-long funding freeze.**
- 2 Even out the reimbursement rate for the special needs scholarship program to more closely match the reimbursement rate for students with disabilities in public schools.**
- 3 Initiate a meaningful audit of special education quality and outcomes, including the preparation of students with disabilities for college and the workforce.**
- 4 Direct DPI to develop an internal special education quality improvement plan to address achievement gaps for students with disabilities, Direct DPI to set benchmarks for targeted areas (i.e. academic, disciplinary, least restrictive environment and college/workforce readiness indicators and report annually to the legislature.)**



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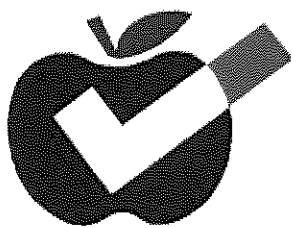
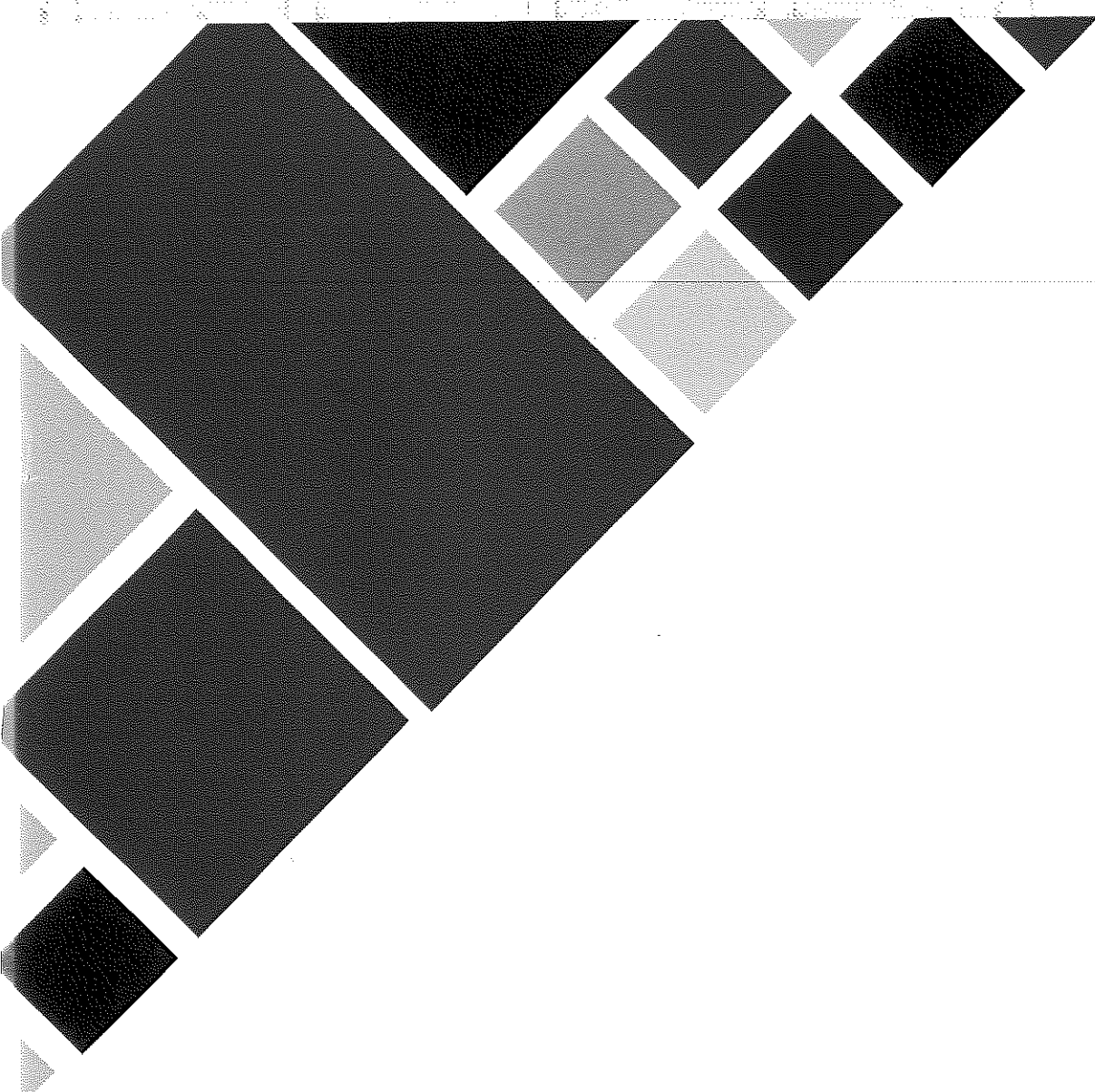
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Notes



Notes





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on special education issues, for assisting in
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